

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S

mystery magazine

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Camouflage takes many forms in many wars.



IN OPEN HIDING

SERGEANT MORRELL had flown up to us from the St. Louis Police Department and I was assigned to give him all the help I could.

He reached into his briefcase and pulled out a photocopy of a letter. "This is what reopened the case."

The letter came from a Fr. Gutierrez, of Los Angeles.

On the tenth of this month (wrote Gutierrez) I was called to St. Mary's hospital in this city to administer last rites to one Donald O'Keane.

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O'Keane had been stabbed in a barroom brawl earlier in the evening and rushed to the hospital. All that could be done for him medically was done, but it was apparent that he had very little time left.

O'Keane's confession was quite

ment, to 'clear the records', as he put it.

It seems that two years ago, while he was employed as a groom on the estate of a Mr. Neville, just outside of your city, he witnessed the murder of one James (Jim) Patterson, a stable hand.

O'Keane believed that he stood accused of the death of Patterson—though he was not quite certain—since he fled the scene of the murder immediately and took a plane to the West Coast.

Both Patterson and O'Keane were quartered in a small cottage behind the stables.

On the evening of the murder, O'Keane went to the nearest town for 'a few beers', driving one of the Neville station wagons, which it was his prerogative to use.

He returned at one in the morning, somewhat the worse for wear,



long—he had not led the most exemplary of lives—and he confessed to a number of serious matters, which I am not at liberty to reveal, of course. However he did make one exception, which he asked me to pass on to your police depart-

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he admitted. After putting the station wagon back into the Neville garages, he walked to his cottage, some three hundred yards from the main house.

As he approached the cottage, he saw that the livingroom was still brightly lit. The picture window revealed Patterson, in pajamas, in the middle of the room facing a man with a revolver in his hand.

O'Keane crept cautiously to an open and screened side window and overheard the following conversation, which he claimed he remembered verbatim, and which I copied word for word—realizing that such things might be important in a matter of murder.

O'Keane heard the stranger's voice first.

"You didn't give a damn if the whole squad was wiped out. Ten thousand dollars for each body. That would come to seventy thousand, wouldn't it?"

"It was all a mistake. I can explain everything."

"Like hell it was a mistake. You tried to kill us all and it damn near worked. If it hadn't been for that tunnel we'd all be dead."

At this point the stranger pulled the trigger of the gun and Patterson dropped to the floor. The stranger then stood over him and proceeded to shoot him three more times.

O'Keane, of course, prudently re-

mained hidden, not wanting to draw attention to himself.

The murderer then pocketed the revolver and left the cottage by the front door, walking down the path to the driveway which led to the public road.

O'Keane described the murderer as being of medium height and weight, with dark hair. He wore a white T-shirt and gray slacks.

Anyone else might have phoned the police immediately. O'Keane, however, was in no such a position to do so, since he himself was wanted by the police for a rather serious crime.

He removed the money from Patterson's wallet—some eighty dollars, as he remembers it—threw some clothes into a suitcase and drove to St. Louis where he caught a plane for the West Coast.

The letter concluded with Fr. Gutierrez offering to cooperate further, if he should be called upon to do so.

"It was true enough," Morrell said. "James Patterson was shot four times—all of the bullets lodging in the heart—on the evening of May 15, 1969."

"Four times? Somebody really meant it."

Morrell nodded. "Neville's estate is in one of our better suburbs, but we have a working agreement with its police department to take over

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anything big. We couldn't find any murder weapon and since O'Keane had disappeared, we put two and two together and came up with four. We figured that O'Keane killed Patterson, probably in an argument, and then took off, first emptying Patterson's wallet for traveling money."

I agreed that we probably would have come to the same conclusion.

Morrell continued. "We picked up O'Keane's fingerprints from his bedroom and passed them on to Washington. It turned out that he was wanted in Kansas City for a barroom killing. As far as we were concerned, it was open and shut and we sent out an All Points to pick up O'Keane. Nothing ever came of it."

Morrell picked up the letter. "We got this last week and this time around we sent Patterson's prints to Washington—the coroner had on file the copies taken after the murder. We learned that the last anybody had heard of him, he had deserted his outfit in Vietnam."

"But he got back to be killed in Missouri?"

"That's right. So we had to do more digging. We traced Patterson back to his Army unit and talked to the former captain of his company, name of Fanning. Fanning is out of the Army now, and a supermarket manager in Chicago. So I flew up

IN OPEN HIDING

there and got the story of the third squad of the second platoon of Able Company."

Morrell put the letter back into his briefcase. "Patterson was Sergeant Patterson then. There were eight men in his squad and every one of them was worth ten thousand dollars dead."

I waited.

Morrell smiled. "Insurance money. Each one of them had a G.I. insurance policy for the full amount." He sighed. "Maybe it was a crazy thing to do, but they were all in their early twenties and kids come up with weird things like that."

"Weird things like what?"

"The eight of them pooled their insurance policies, making the group the beneficiary." Morrell paused a moment. "In other words, if any one of them died, the others would be equal beneficiaries of his insurance policy."

"Isn't that illegal?"

"No. The insured has complete freedom to make anyone or any group his beneficiary, if he so chooses. Of course when Captain Fanning heard about what they'd done, he tried to talk them out of it, but they stood pat."

Morrell sat back. "That set the stage for the morning of February 12, 1968. Captain Fanning's company had been out with the battal-

ion on what they used to call a 'search and destroy' mission. It turned up practically nothing, and so the company withdrew, back to the staging area where it would be air-lifted out the next morning.

"Fanning put out the usual perimeter guard, and one of the squads used was Patterson's. It was stationed in a deserted native village about a quarter-mile from the main body.

"There were eight men in that squad: Patterson, Bowman, Shelby, Crawford, Thelan, Ewing, Knapp, and Woodruff. Patterson and Knapp, the communications man, set up shop for the night in a small hut. The other six took over the village chief's house. They spent the night there.

"In the morning, Ewing, poking around the area, discovered a V.C. tunnel under one of the huts. He woke up the other five in the chief's house and they gathered around the entrance of the tunnel, debating whether they should explore it and wondering about booby traps."

"Knapp and Patterson too?" I asked.

"No. Everybody assumed at the time that they were still in their hut sleeping. And that's when the shelling started."

"Shelling? The V.C.?"

"No. The American guns opened up on them. The first shell killed

Woodruff instantly and seriously wounded Shelby. The other four now had no choice but to dive into the V.C. tunnel, dragging Shelby with them.

"It was one of the deeper, more elaborate V.C. tunnels and it hadn't been booby-trapped. The four of them, hauling Shelby with them, went down deep and sweated out the barrage. When it stopped, they couldn't get out the way they'd come in—the entrance being blasted—but they found their way out through another passage that ended in the jungle. They made their way back to where the village had been and there they found Patterson apparently searching through the ruins."

"How did he survive the shelling?"

Morrell smiled slightly. "Patterson stared at them for maybe half a minute and then he turned and walked off into the jungle. That was the last time any of them ever saw Patterson. Except for the one who murdered him, of course."

"What about the shelling? Why did that happen?"

"At six that same morning, Captain Fanning received an order from battalion headquarters to withdraw his outposts immediately. It had been decided to destroy the village with artillery fire, the barrage to begin at seven-thirty. So

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Captain Fanning got in radio touch with Knapp. He gave the order to withdraw immediately, and Knapp acknowledged the message."

"But obviously the squad didn't withdraw? Were there any witnesses to the fact that Captain Fanning really did pass on the order to the squad?"

"Yes. Everybody in Fanning's command tent—the first sergeant, the company clerk, and Fanning's own communications man."

"But Knapp didn't pass on the information to the rest of the squad. Why not?"

"Because he was killed before he could."

I frowned. "In the shelling?"

"No." Morrell removed a cigar from his breast pocket. "When the surviving members of the squad got back to the company, there was a quick investigation, of course. Recovering the body of Woodruff, the medics also found Knapp dead. His body had been damaged some by the bombardment, but not so much that they couldn't make out that he had been stabbed to death."

Morrell lit the cigar. "This is how it was all put together by the investigating team. Fanning passed on the order to evacuate to Knapp. Knapp and Patterson were in the same hut. Just the two of them. This must have given Patterson his big idea. Maybe he asked Knapp if he

wanted to get in on it, maybe not. We'll never know. Anyway, Patterson killed Knapp before he could pass on the news of the evacuation to the rest of the squad. Then he probably hid Knapp's body under something in the hut and slipped off into the jungle to wait out the barrage.

"After the shelling ended, he'd make his way back down to the base looking dusty and damaged and claim to have miraculously survived the bombardment and ask what the hell was the idea of shelling your own troops?"

"What about the knife wounds in Knapp?" I asked. "How was Patterson going to explain that if somebody noticed?"

"It's a guess, of course, but I think that's why Patterson came back to the village after the shelling. He intended to set off a grenade under Knapp's shirt to take care of that little problem—something he couldn't do before the bombardment since obviously the rest of the squad would have heard it."

"How would he account for the fact that Knapp didn't pass on the message to evacuate?"

"He wouldn't really have to. If things went the way he expected, there would be no survivors to say that he and Knapp had ever occupied the same hut. The army would

have to assume that while Knapp got the message, he somehow misunderstood it. Just another foul-up. It happens all the time."

"So when Patterson saw the survivors coming out of the jungle, he saw that his only chance was to run away?"

Morrell nodded. "And somehow he made his way back to the United States. It happens. They desert. They die or are killed or are captured in the jungle, but sometimes they show up in Sweden or God knows where. I wouldn't doubt that some besides Patterson made their way back to the United States."

"What about the insurance money?" I asked. "Woodruff and Knapp died. Did that mean twenty thousand dollars for the squad? Excluding Patterson, of course."

"No. They decided they didn't want to touch the money. It went to the parents of Woodruff and Knapp. They also called off their little agreement so that no one else would be tempted."

"You have the names of the surviving squad members?"

"Yes. Captain Fanning was one of those company commanders who prides himself on knowing every member of his unit. He hasn't seen any of them since they were discharged, but he remembered their names and I got their present addresses from the Veterans Adminis-

tration insurance division." He opened his notebook. "There are five. Shelby, Bowman, Crawford, Thelan, and Ewing. But we can cross off Thelan and Ewing."

"Why?"

"Thelan is about six-three and weighs two-twenty. That's hardly the way the murderer was described. And Ewing was known as 'Red' Ewing. His hair is as flaming as you can get. Of course he could have dyed it. But for now our most obvious suspects are Bowman, Shelby, and Crawford. They all fall within the description of the murderer."

"And they're all from this area?"

"The company was an Army Reserve unit called up by the President. Even by the time it got to Vietnam it was still eighty percent intact." He studied the notebook again. "I think we can start with Robert Bowman."

We checked out a car from the police garage in the basement of the municipal building.

I eased the car into traffic. "Assuming that either Bowman, Shelby, or Crawford killed Patterson, how did the killer know where to find him or even that he was still alive?"

"Neville—the man Patterson worked for—is a big man in our part of the country and he's running for the Senate. Photographers from

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Midwest Life swarmed down on him a while ago and took a couple of hundred pictures, of which they printed eight. One of them showed Neville sitting on a horse. In the background a stable hand was sweeping up. It was Patterson, and he probably didn't even know that he got in the picture. I figure that one of the squad saw the photograph, hopped into a plane, shot Patterson, and came back before daylight."

Robert Bowman's address proved to be an apartment building just off the campus of the university. Morrell and I consulted the mailboxes in the vestibule and then took the elevator to the fifth floor. Morrell pressed the buzzer beside door 518.

When the door opened, I saw that Robert Bowman was an American Indian. There was absolutely no mistaking the features.

I looked at Morrell. He avoided my eyes. We identified ourselves and Bowman invited us in. "What can I do for you?"

He occupied an efficiency apartment and had evidently been studying. Open books—some of which I recognized as law volumes—and sheets of paper were scattered about a table.

"Do you know a James Patterson?" Morrell asked.

Bowman became traditionally inscrutable. "I used to. In the Army.

Why? Is he in some trouble?"

Morrell wasn't going to give away anything if he could help it. "Do you know where Patterson is now?"

"I don't know if he's even alive. He disappeared into a Vietnam jungle three years ago."

Morrell smiled. "Patterson got out of that jungle and made his way back to the United States."

Bowman's eyes gleamed for a moment. "He's still alive?"

"I didn't say that much. He got back, but he was shot and killed two years ago."

Bowman folded his arms over his chest and waited.

"I've had a talk with Captain Fanning," Morrell said. "He told me all about your squad, all about your insurance club, and all about the shelling. He says that every man of you swore to kill Patterson if any of you ever saw him again."

Bowman shrugged. "We didn't exactly sit in a circle and make a ceremony out of it. But that was four years ago and time passes." He indicated the papers on the table. "What happened in the Army is behind me, as far as I'm concerned. This is my life now. I wouldn't jeopardize it to kill anybody. Not even Patterson."

"There was a witness to Patterson's murder," Morrell said. "He described the murderer as of me-

dium height, dark hair, medium weight, wearing a T-shirt and light gray slacks. He also overheard enough of the conversation between Patterson and his murderer to definitely establish that the murderer must have been one of the members of your squad."

Bowman's face remained impassive. "Where is this witness now?"

Morrell cleared his throat. "Unfortunately the witness himself is dead."

Bowman smiled slowly. "The murder occurred *two* years ago, but you've just gotten around to seeing me now?"

Morrell seemed backed into a corner. "The witness did not choose to speak up until shortly before his death last week."

Bowman's smile broadened. "Did this deceased witness mention anything else about the murderer? Color, for instance? Like white, or black, or yellow? Or perhaps red?"

Morrell judiciously considered the questions. "No. But he *could* have overlooked it."

Bowman laughed. "You think so?"

After we left Bowman's apartment, I turned to Morrell. You *knew* Bowman was an Indian before we came up here, didn't you?"

"Well . . . yes," Morrell admitted. "But I had to see for myself how *much* Indian. I mean, I've got

a brother-in-law who claims he's one-fourth Cherokee, but if he didn't have the papers to prove it . . ."

We drove on to Fred Shelby's address, a large rooming house on the city's east side.

Morrell and I identified ourselves to the landlady and she asked the inevitable question, "What's he done?"

"We'd just like to ask him some questions," Morrell said.

She decided she had to accept that. "He isn't in."

"Where can we find him?" Morrell asked.

"He's in the V.A. hospital. Been there two weeks this time." She sighed. "Poor man, he's in and he's out. I try to keep a room open for him." She studied Morrell. "You wouldn't be the one who phoned?" Then she answered the question herself. "I guess not. Otherwise you wouldn't be asking where he is now, would you?"

Morrell frowned. "There was a phone call for Shelby?"

She nodded. "I gave him the same answer I gave you."

"The caller didn't say who he was?"

"No."

At the Veterans Hospital, we showed our identification to one of the supervisors, a Mr. MacGregor, and he gave us his cooperation.

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"I'd like to check on a patient of yours," Morrell said. "Fred Shelby. Was he in this hospital on or around May 15, 1969?"

MacGregor took us to the Records Section, where he paged through Shelby's folder. "Yes, Shelby was here that entire month and half of the next. He's one of our in-and-out patients. War wounds, you know."

"Are patients allowed to leave at any time they want?" Morrell asked.

"Of course. They are patients, not prisoners. However, if they give up their beds without authorization, they might have a little difficulty getting back in. Usually there's a waiting list."

"I was thinking more in terms of a night or two out," Morrell said. "A weekend pass, perhaps. Could a patient check out for just that time and not jeopardize his returning?"

"Yes, we give such permission."

"Do you have a record of Fred Shelby being gone on the day I mentioned?"

MacGregor shook his head. "I'm afraid not. We don't consider such things permanent records."

Morrell asked where we could find Fred Shelby now, and MacGregor directed us. Shelby's ward appeared to be devoted to ambulatory patients. They wore wine-colored robes, some reading on their beds,

others in groups around tables playing cards, and some gathered at the television set at the end of the long room.

We stopped at the ward nurse's desk and asked her which one of the patients was Shelby.

She pointed him out, propped up and reading, on one of the beds down the left side of the ward. "He's getting popular today."

Morrell rubbed his chin. "Popular?"

She pointed to the phone on her desk. "He got a call fifteen minutes ago. The boys here don't get many phone calls and fewer visitors."

"You wouldn't happen to know who called him?" Morrell asked.

"Sorry, but I don't listen in. And besides, mostly he listened." She frowned momentarily. "Come to think of it, though, I *did* hear him say, 'Thanks, Bob,' when he hung up."

Morrell and I went down the room to Shelby's bed.

Fred Shelby had only one arm.

He smiled slightly. "What can I do for you?"

Morrell's eyes turned from the empty sleeve. "Robert Bowman phoned you about us?"

Shelby apparently saw no point in denying it. "Yes."

Morrell sighed. "You had more reason than any of the others for killing Patterson, didn't you? After

all, he cost you an arm, didn't he?"

Shelby seemed to stare past us for a few moments. Then he said, "And one lung, and one kidney, and a few yards of intestines."

Morrell chewed his lower lip for a moment. "Possibly you could give us some information. Anything that might help us to solve this crime."

"Crime?" Shelby lost his smile. "I don't regard it as a crime. It's much more like retribution."

"I can understand your attitude," Morrell said. "But this is still legally a case of murder."

"Why does the murderer have to be a member of the squad? Patterson could have made a lot of other enemies."

"But none of them would have used the same words that the murderer used."

"I'm sorry," Shelby said, "but I can't help you."

When we left Shelby, Morrell stopped to talk to the nurse again. "Shelby has one arm missing?"

She seemed surprised by the question. "Why, yes. You saw him, didn't you?"

Morrell colored slightly. "Yes, we did."

In the corridor, Morrell felt obligated to explain. "I had to ask her about the arm. After all, Shelby could have held it *behind* him inside the robe and had the sleeve pinned up like that to throw us off."

We went down to our car and Morrell opened his notebook for Crawford's address. "It's got to be Crawford," he said firmly. "He's the only one left."

"Suppose he has just one leg?"

"One leg we can accept. The murderer wore slacks and they could have concealed something like that. But not a missing arm. He wore a T-shirt, remember?"

"Do you have anything more on Crawford besides the fact that he fits the description of the murderer?"

"Captain Fanning remembers him as a very quiet person who was always reading a book."

Crawford lived in an old, but still respectable neighborhood. I noticed a ramp beside the stairs leading to the front door.

A sturdy woman, probably in her fifties, answered the doorbell. "Yes?"

We identified ourselves.

"Come in," she said. "He's expecting you." She led us into the livingroom and then continued on into the kitchen.

The livingroom appeared to have been converted into a library. Ceiling to floor bookshelves lined the walls, and more books spilled onto the tables and chairs.

In the midst of this—in a wheelchair—sat Franklin Crawford.

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Crawford closed the book he had been reading and removed his glasses. "Yes?"

"Bowman phoned?" Morrell demanded.

"Yes," Crawford said. "He told me the good news about Patterson."

Morrell said, "You were one of those who swore they would kill Patterson?"

"Yes. We all did, for that matter, though it wasn't as formal as it sounds and I don't know how many of us would have really gone through with it, given the opportunity." Crawford's eyes clouded for a moment. "Woodruff was my best friend."

Morrell frowned. "Woodruff?" Then he remembered. "Oh, yes, he was the one killed in the shelling."

Crawford nodded. "Woodruff and I went to grade school and high school together. We joined the Army Reserve at the same time."

Morrell got to the salient point. "How long have you been in a wheelchair?"

"Slightly over three years. I was hurt while working in the Harrington Paper Products Company warehouse. A stack of newsprint rolls broke free and one of them pinned me against the wall. I haven't been able to walk since."

I had been looking about the

room. "You completed high school?"

"Yes."

"And after your discharge from the Army, you got a job with the Harrington Paper Products Company?"

"Yes."

"You had no plans for a higher education? College, perhaps?"

"No." He smiled faintly. "I have never had any great drive for a formal education. I am not a counter of degrees."

When we left Crawford, Morrell seemed rather grim. He looked up the address of the Harrington Paper Company in a public phone book and we drove to its location.

We found the Personnel Office and talked to a Mr. Yancey.

He paged through Crawford's records. "Ah, yes. A rather interesting settlement."

"How much was it?" Morrell asked.

"Crawford turned down a lump sum. In the final agreement, the company agreed to pay his continuing medical expenses plus a monthly sum based on the National Cost of Living Index."

"Cost of Living Index?"

Yancey chuckled. "Though Mr. Crawford and I are on different sides of the fence—so to speak—I must admire him as a shrewd bargainer. Had the company agreed to

pay him a *fixed* sum per month—let us say six hundred dollars—it would have been inevitable that the attrition of inflation would lower its *real* dollar value as time went by. For instance, six hundred dollars today might be worth only five hundred in purchasing power some five or ten years from now. However, in this case, Mr. Crawford's payments are adjusted at the beginning of every fiscal year."

Morrell absorbed that. "How long will these payments continue?"

"As long as Crawford is incapacitated. In his case that is as long as he lives."

"I assume that the company's own doctors examined Crawford thoroughly?"

"Most thoroughly, I assure you."

"And their conclusions?"

"Mr. Crawford will never walk again."

Outside the building, Morrell sighed. "This is impossible. None of them could have murdered Patterson."

"Do you have Red Ewing's address?" I asked.

He nodded gloomily.

Ewing's address proved to be a run-down apartment house on the west side. He wasn't in, but the superintendent was able to provide us with the address of his place of employment.

We drove to the auto junkyard in the city's valley.

Ewing's boss stared at our credentials and then looked up. "What's Ewing done now?"

"We just want to talk to him," Morrell said.

The boss rose from his swivel chair and went to the door of the shack. "Red," he called. "Come here."

Red Ewing, in greasy coveralls, appeared after a few moments.

His boss thumbed in our general direction. "Cops want to talk to you." Then he left us alone with Ewing.

"Do you know a James Patterson?" Morrell asked.

Ewing grinned slowly. "I know all about it. I got a telephone call."

"From Robert Bowman?"

"I forget who."

Morrell rubbed his neck. "You were one of those who threatened to kill Patterson?"

"You bet. And I meant it too. If he were alive today, I'd kill him on sight." Then he smiled again as he amended that. "On the other hand, maybe I'd play it smart."

"How would that be?"

"Now, take this red hair of mine. That's a dangerous thing to carry around. Once anybody sees me, he remembers. So I'd have to do something about the hair."

"Like what?"

"I'd have the occasional wig. Some wear that case there around."

The policeman came earlier. Morrell said, "Are you doing?"

Ewing said himself. "I told me about Morrell's invitation. I'm silent."

Ewing said, "Wouldn't I be shot?"

Morrell said, "I can handle it."

"I was said with of pride. superman was my light. Right."

Morrell's role office.

Ewing said, "I was where."

Morrell's desk and ing had i of the St terson w

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"I'd have it cut real short. Just for the occasion. And then I'd get me a wig. Something like dark brown. I'd wear that when I shot Patterson, in case there happened to be a witness around."

The possibility had occurred to me earlier.

Morrell's jaw was thrust out a bit. "Are you telling us that's what you did?"

Ewing seemed to be enjoying himself. "Aren't you going to tell me about my rights?"

Morrell warily accepted the invitation. "You have the right to remain silent. If you do not choose—"

Ewing held up a hand. "Wouldn't you like to know where I was the night Patterson was shot?"

Morrell's teeth ground slightly. "I can hardly wait."

"I was in the state pen," Ewing said with what amounted to a touch of pride. "I got caught dragging a supermarket safe into my truck. It was my first offense and I got off light. Right now I'm on parole."

Morrell sighed. "Who's your parole officer?"

Ewing gave us his name and told us where we could reach him.

Morrell used the phone on the desk and verified the fact that Ewing had indeed been inside the walls of the State Prison on the night Patterson was murdered.

Back in our car, Morrell said, "We might just as well round it out and check on Thelan, too."

We found Thelan working in the pro shop of the Lakeside Country Club. He was six feet three inches tall, weighed at least two hundred and twenty pounds, and had a handicap of three strokes.

Morrell and I decided that we were now off duty, and went to the nearest bar.

Our drinks came, and Morrell sipped his whiskey and sweet soda. He blinked. "I just had a thought. *Captain Fanning* is medium-sized, medium-weight, and has dark hair. You don't suppose he felt strongly enough about what happened to his squad to actually . . ."

"No," I said. "The murderer used the words, 'You tried to kill *us* and it damn near worked. If it hadn't been for that tunnel, we'd all be dead.'"

Morrell rubbed his forehead. "But one of them *had* to have killed Patterson."

Yes, one of them killed Patterson and I thought I knew which one it was.

"Excuse me," I said, "I've got to make a phone call."

I went to the phone booth and closed the door behind me. I thumbed through the telephone book for the number I wanted.

Five suspects:

Thelan was much too tall and heavy to have been the murderer.

Red Ewing had been in jail at the time Patterson was shot.

Bowman was an Indian and obviously did not fit the description either.

Why hadn't Captain Fanning told Morrell that Crawford was confined to a wheelchair?

Because he didn't *know* that Crawford had been crippled.

And why hadn't Captain Fanning told Morrell that Shelby had only one arm?

Because . . .

I dialed and got through to MacGregor at the Veterans Hospital.

It took him a minute or two to get Shelby's file. "Shelby was seriously wounded in Vietnam, but he didn't lose his arm there. That happened in an automobile accident eight months ago."

Yes, I thought, Morrell and I had seen a one-armed man in a Veterans Hospital and we had immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had lost the arm in Vietnam. But nine out of ten amputations in this country are the result of automobile

and industrial accidents, not war wounds.

And when Morrell had said, "You had more reason than any of the others for killing Patterson, didn't you? After all, he cost you an arm," Shelby had realized that we did not know that he had two arms at the time of Patterson's death. He had gratefully taken that as his out, his alibi.

I hung up and paused before opening the door of the booth.

What did we really have on Shelby beside the fact that he was of medium height, medium weight, had dark hair, and two arms at the time Patterson was killed?

With O'Keane dead, there could be no positive identification.

Did we even have enough for an indictment, not to mention a trial?

I didn't think so.

All we would be doing was to make more trouble for a man who already had enough of it.

I rejoined Morrell at the bar.

He stared moodily at his drink. "Well, you can't win 'em all."

"No," I said. "You can't," and I kept my mouth shut.

